1: Linton E-8 (1926-27) 1933 FY8 Tanala FY8

241 fern and low bushes and the second planting never yields as good crops as the first. Because of this, the natives try to clear new land each season, going farther and farther from their villages. There is little effort to keep the fires within bounds and if the season is dry [361] large areas of uncut timber are often burned over. The result is a wholesale destruction of large timber and the final exhaustion of the lands about a village. When this occurs, the village must be moved to new territory but, curiously enough, the natives never gave land exhaustion as a reason for such movements. The village will move [791] on the advice of an *ombiasy* ("medicine-man"), who will assign some supernatural reason for the crop failures.

241 423 59% When the *tavy* is inconveniently far from the village, the people camp there, building small, temporary houses. Among the Menabe the members of each lineage formerly camped and worked together, as a protection from enemy raids. When a section of land was to be cleared and burned, the heads of families marked out sectors along its front and each family cleared back into the jungle as far as it thought necessary to provide food for the year. The families thus had strips of crop land of approximately equal width, but of a length proportionate to their industry. The crops were the absolute property of the family, but the land reverted to the lineage and was reapportioned at the next burning. At the present time, this method has largely lapsed, and families are holding and working their *tavy* independently.

241 Seed for rice and other crops is usually collected shortly after the harvest and kept in *fénitr'ambony*, small cloth bags, etc. These are hung up in the dwelling, over the fireplace, so that the smoke will help to protect them from insects. Sometimes wood ashes are mixed with the seed for the same reason. In a few houses I found [513] soft bags of matting, stuffed with seed rice, in use as pillows. Seed beans are sometimes kept in peculiar baskets made in imitation of clusters of bean pods (Fig. 1, c, d).

241 789 As far as I could learn, no special importance is attached to the selection of seed. There are no seed gathering ceremonies, no charms are placed with the seed, and there is no attempt to increase its yield by magical means. Seeds are usually soaked in warm water before planting, but this is not a universal practice.

Apparently no rites to promote fertility are performed at planting time. This is rather curious in view of the wide occurrence of such rites in connection with Asiatic rice culture, but I am convinced that if they ever existed among the Tanala they have been forgotten.

1: Linton E-5 (1926-27) 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

793 All priests are subject to certain *fady* ("prohibitions" or "rules of conduct") which usually extend to their families as well. The commonest of these seems to be a prohibition on eating pork.

791 OMBIASY AND THE ANCESTOR CULT.—Native medicine-men or magicians, called *ombiasy*, have been described elsewhere (see section on *Ombiasy*) and only their activities in connection with the ancestor cult will be described here. They are practitioners of divination and magic and are sharply distinguished from the priests, who do not work with either. Throughout most of Madagascar the same person may not hold both offices and if an *ombiasy* inherits a priesthood, he must give up his magical paraphernalia and practices at once. At the same time, there is no hostility between the two groups and they are not considered rivals. The *ombiasy* are thought to be more skilled than the priests in everything pertaining to the supernatural and the priests constantly consult them as to the best means for propitiating the ancestors.

791 769 796 *Ombiasy* frequently instigate sacrifices, announcing that illness or calamity is due to offended ancestral spirits, or that the spirit of so-and-so has appeared to them and demanded an offering from some one of his descendants. They are always consulted as to the most propitious time and place for communal sacrifices and for individual sacrifices as well, if the sacrificer is rich enough to pay for their services. Among the Tanala they also act as stage managers in the more important sacrifices. This results in great variation in minor details of ceremonial procedure for, although the general pattern is always the same, the *ombiasy* is expected to change some detail each time. If he fails to do this, there seems to be a feeling of disappointment and a tendency to doubt his ability. In general, only *ombiasy* belonging to the gens are allowed to manage sacrifices, for outsiders will not be familiar with the usual ritual of the group, or with the names of its ancestors. However, if a foreign *ombiasy* of great reputation is present, he may be asked to take charge. He consults with the priest and, when the time comes to say the invocation, stands beside him and repeats the invocation with him, the priest speaking in a low voice and the *ombiasy* in a loud one. Minor priests, or those who feel uncertain of their own ability, may delegate their office to the *ombiasy* of their village, who thenceforth both direct and perform all sacrifices. The arrangement is temporary and the office reverts to the priest's family at his death.

The Tanala appear to be the only tribe in which it is permissible for an *ombiasy* to sacrifice to the ancestors, except in his own behalf

1: Linton E-6 (1926-27) 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

or for his immediate family. The Imerina may have been an exception to this rule, but accounts of the early conditions there are vague and conflicting. Elsewhere, priests cannot delegate their functions to *ombiasy* even temporarily. Among the western tribes, where the distinction between the two offices is most rigid, *ombiasy* may not even direct sacrifices. 791 796 769

SACRIFICES ON BEHALF OF THE GENS.—Among the Menabe, sacrifices on behalf of the entire gens were made only in time of national calamity, such as pestilence, very serious crop failure, or an attack which threatened to drive the gens from its territory or subjugate it. They were performed on the tops of sacred mountains, the idea being that the worshippers were thus lifted closer to heaven and their prayers made more easily audible to the gods and ancestors. Each gens had one or more of these mountains within its territory. The Zafiakotry had three, which were the sites of three of their ancient villages, later abandoned. I could not learn whether the sacred mountains of other gentes had ever been inhabited. At present it is not taboo to visit the mountains or even to cultivate their lower slopes, but the summits are shunned as the abode of spirits. These high places are not marked by memorial stones or other permanent altars. A temporary wooden altar (see Sacrifices on Behalf of Individuals) was erected for the ceremony. 618 782 778

When there was more than one sacred mountain, the leading *ombiasy* of the gens, or some foreign *ombiasy* of great power, indicated which one should be used. He also selected the priest who was to officiate from among all those in the gens and indicated the ritual to be used, especially whether the sacrifice was to be boiled or grilled. The ritual was the same as for individual sacrifices. Apparently no sacrifices on behalf of a gens have been performed in recent times. [791]

Sacrifices on behalf of a village or group of villages were performed before setting out on a war party. These have been described in the section on Warfare. They may have been performed on a few other occasions as well, but informants were uncertain. Since the establishment of French control they also have become obsolete. [724]

SACRIFICES ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUALS.—Sacrifices of this type are the commonest of all Tanala ceremonies. Although they are always made on behalf of some individual, the larger and more important ones are participated in by the entire village and are felt to be a reassertion of the close relation existing between the living and the souls of their ancestors. They may be performed during 782

Their memorial stones are erected anywhere and are not used for sacrifices to the ancestors as a whole. Many of their sacrifices are made at pointed wooden posts, about 5 feet high and 3 inches in diameter. Numbers of these posts are to be seen in their villages. In some cases each family has one or more, erected to the east of the dwelling. Apparently both the *mwoka* and *mwon* rites are employed, but I was unable to learn whether temporary altars were built, how the offerings were arranged, etc. The sacrifices are performed by hereditary priests under the direction of *ombiasy*, as among the Menabe. 778 782

SACRIFICES TO INDIVIDUAL SPIRITS

Sacrifices to individual spirits seem to be fairly common among the Menabe, although they are of less importance than those made to the ancestors as a whole. Apparently the Ikongo have similar ideas and practices, but no exact information could be obtained. The Menabe honor both ancestral and non-ancestral spirits. 782 769

Sacrifices to individual ancestors may be made because the ghost has demanded them, to placate a malicious or offended ghost, or in fulfillment of a vow. In general, the appearance of an ancestor in a dream or vision is interpreted as a demand for a sacrifice. If the apparition has not made its wishes known, the person who has seen it will consult an *ombiasy* as to the sort of sacrifice required, the proper place, etc. *Ombiasy* are believed to be in close touch with the ancestral spirits, who visit them from time to time and, through them, demand sacrifices from specified descendants. After such a visit, the *ombiasy* notifies the victim, who is bound to comply with the demand, under penalty of sickness or other misfortune. Persons talked to this way often grumble and may even ask the ghost for a postponement, but they do not seem to doubt the genuineness of the communication. The belief offers a good opportunity for blackmail and one informant remarked cynically that it seemed to be only the ancestors of the rich who demanded sacrifices through *ombiasy*. The *ombiasy* may also decide, by divination, that an illness, or persistent ill fortune, is due to the malevolent activity of a special ghost and advise that a sacrifice be made to placate it. 782 769 787 (191)

Vows to individual ancestors are commonest in time of sudden danger. They arise from a feeling that a close relative, as a father or grandfather, will be more attentive and helpful than the ancestors as a whole. The greatest vow is that to erect a memorial stone, because of the expense involved. Informants knew only one instance of such a promise. Commonly an ox is vowed. 782 769

It is thought that the souls of such persons reside in their memorial stones. The supplicant approaches the stone and slaps it several times with his open hand, to awaken the spirit. If he does this properly, his request is sure to be granted. He then says: "Listen, listen, so-and-so. I am going on a journey [giving details of his route, etc.]. If I come back safe and the trip is a success, I will bring here and sacrifice to you so much honey [or snuff, rum, etc.]." When the prayer has been granted, the vower makes the offering himself, with no ceremony except a second awakening of the spirit and a brief announcement.

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OMBIASY

The term *ombiasy* signifies a medicine-man or magician. The Menabe recognize two main classes, *ombiasy manaopitra* and *ombiasy mpanibily*. The latter are divided into *ombiasy sakalo* and *ombiasy akazo*. All the types of *ombiasy* include both men and women. Men are more numerous, but some of the most famous are women.

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The *ombiasy manaopitra* are spiritualist mediums. They are usually marked by some slight mental or nervous abnormality. No special training is required and they begin practicing as soon as they become conscious of their powers. Their main activity is the discovery of the cause of illness and the means for curing it. Informants thought that they might be appealed to in other matters, but could give no instances.

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Seances are held in the *ombiasy's* house, always at night. The *ombiasy* spreads a mat in the northeast corner of the house, placing on it a bottle of rum and certain charms. He sits beside it or lies on it. Sometimes both *ombiasy* and mat are covered with a tent-like mosquito net of raffia cloth. This tent is about 5 feet high and comes down to the floor, giving complete concealment. The sick person and his relatives seat themselves on the floor, apparently without any fixed order, and the fire and all lights are extinguished. The people begin clapping and singing softly. After a time a knocking is heard on the walls, or voices are heard repeating: "We have come. We have come." There are sometimes as many as ten or twelve spirits, distinguishable by their different voices. The voices are heard and seem to come from the east or west of the *ombiasy*, sometimes high, sometimes low, but never far from him. The head of the family, or the sick person, then tells the spirits why they have been called. After this the *ombiasy* explains the situation fully and

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1: Linton E-6 (1936-37) 1938 FYS Tanala FYS

Although the *ombiasy mpisikidy* may perform certain functions in connection with the cult of the dead, their main activities are in connection with divination, the manufacture of charms, etc. While the priests direct their activities toward placating and controlling Beings, whether Deities or ghosts, the *ombiasy mpisikidy* specialize in forecasting and controlling the operations of Fate. Even when they are in close touch with spirits, they do not control their ghostly advisers, but simply act as their mouthpieces. The controls rarely demand anything for themselves. They simply know what will happen and tell the *ombiasy*.

Ombiasy mpisikidy are divided into *ombiasy vitsio* and *ombiasy ahazo*. The two groups perform identical functions, but derive their magical abilities from different sources.

Ombiasy vitsio (lit. "spirit *ombiasy*") are under the control of some individual ghost, although it seems that a few may have more than one ghostly adviser. The ghost is usually that of an ancestor, commonly one who has himself been an *ombiasy*. The spirit selects the person and notifies him that he has been chosen by a dream or vision. If the person is reluctant to accept the appointment, which is not infrequent, the ghost may desist. However, if it appears a second time and repeats the demand, the person must obey, on pain of death. Apparently the ghost visits the *ombiasy* at will and is dominating rather than dominated. At first it makes its will known through dreams, later, as the *ombiasy* becomes more accustomed to it, it will speak to him while he is awake and engaged in ordinary activities. Apparently some practitioners of this class do have auditory hallucinations and are convinced of the genuineness of the control. The spirits will often notify them in advance when their services will be required, so that they will have the medicine or the charm ready when the person comes to ask for it. They cure the sick, make charms, direct ceremonies, etc., like other *ombiasy*, but most of them do not use mechanical means of divination, relying on their controls for information. Although most of them are considered slightly inferior to the *ombiasy ahazo*, exceptional ones are accorded the highest rank of all by the natives.

Ombiasy ahazo (lit. "wood *ombiasy*") are far more numerous than all the others put together. They do not claim spirit control and, while the others are often nervously or mentally abnormal, they are, with few exceptions, thoroughly normal and above the average in mentality. All those with whom I became personally acquainted showed an unusual degree of shrewdness and common sense and had

• 791 entered the profession deliberately. Although they made their activities as mysterious as possible, to impress the uninitiated, their own attitude toward their work seemed to me to be sane and almost scientific. They practiced some deliberate trickery and sleight of hand, but were sincere in their belief in the efficacy of their charms and divination and were on the lookout for anything which would increase their efficiency. On occasion, they experimented with new charms and remedies and when established ones failed they ascribed it to error of some sort rather than malevolent counter activity. Although they never confessed their mistakes to their patients and were extraordinarily clever at shifting the blame for failure to them, they seemed to admit their errors to themselves. After many discussions with them I was convinced that they were no more conservative or self-assured than the average European doctor of a hundred years ago.

The profession of *ombiasy* *vkazo* is open to any free person, and is selected by bright young men in much the same spirit that one of us would enter medicine or the law. The aspirant goes to an *ombiasy* of established reputation and asks to be instructed, paying him an initial fee of 0.20 franc. Each piece of instruction is then paid for separately. The first thing learned is the *sikidy*, a mechanical method of divination. When this has been mastered the student pays his [177] instructor 5.00 francs. He then learns the calendar of lucky and unlucky days, or some other method of determining whether a given day is propitious. The fee for this and the subsequent items is fixed by bargaining, while that for the *sikidy* is constant. When the calendar has been learned, the student buys directions for making a number of charms for various purposes, paying for them piece by piece. When he thinks his repertoire is large enough, he leaves his teacher and sets up as an independent practitioner. There is nothing in the nature of an examination and no final fee. It is considered etiquette for the new *ombiasy* to make a substantial present to his teacher when he has become well established, but this is not obligatory. An ambitious man continues his education throughout life, visiting other *ombiasy* to learn charms and remedies which have proved unusually effective. All agreed that there was no one *ombiasy* in the tribe who knew all charms and medicines.

The *ombiasy* are not organized and each one guards his own secrets, sometimes to the extent of refusing to sell. There is little professional etiquette, patients breaking off relations with one *ombiasy* and going to another at will. At the same time, there seems to be little real

L: Lenox 8-6 (1926-27) 1935 PTS Tanala PTS

competition. There is usually only one *ombiasy* in a village and never more than two. I could learn of no case in which two *ombiasy* had pitted themselves against each other, at least publicly. 791

Even in the old days of constant intertribal warfare there were a few foreign *ombiasy* operating among the Tanala. Most of these belonged to the Antaimorona tribe, which still enjoys a great reputation for magic. They are said to have been responsible for the introduction of a regular calendar of lucky and unlucky days. The foreigners were looked up to and could command higher fees for both services and instruction than the native trained men. They were especially in demand when a new village was to be founded. By similar reasoning, Tanala *ombiasy* who had settled among the Betsileo were thought superior by that tribe. 791 177

ACTIVITIES OF THE OMBIASY

DIVINATION

Divination is probably the most important of all the *ombiasy's* activities, for it is the prerequisite for nearly all the others. By means of it the *ombiasy* discovers the cause of illness, the hazards which will attend a journey or business enterprise, the chances of a person in love, etc., and deduces which remedy or charm will prove most effective under the circumstances. 787 165

The Tanala word for divination of all sorts is *sikidy*, a term applied to both the process and the mechanical means used. The Ikongo practice three forms, divination by water, divination by sand, and divination by seeds. The Menabe say that only divination by seeds is native and very few of their *ombiasy* know any other form. Haruspication is altogether lacking and there is no real divination from the flight of birds, etc., although certain acts of birds and animals are considered ominous.

Divination by water is rare and has apparently been borrowed from the southeast coast tribes in very recent times. Water is put in a clear glass bottle, shaken vigorously and then held up and examined. Some practitioners do not look directly at the bottle but study its reflection in a small mirror. The answer is deduced from the movement of the water, its cloudiness, the way in which sediment collects, etc. Apparently each practitioner has his own rules.

In divination by sand, a thin layer of dry sand, usually black, is spread smoothly over a wooden tray. The operator makes marks at random with a small stick, or his finger, and studies the resulting patterns. I was unable to learn the rules, but suspect that it has a

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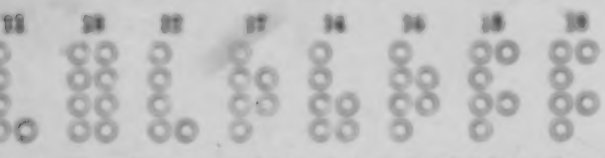

The new groupings are formed by combining the original groupings as follows:

Groups in positions			7 and	8 give group in position				
"	"	"	5	"	6	"	"	"	12
"	"	"	11	"	12	"	"	"	13
"	"	"	1	"	2	"	"	"	14
"	"	"	3	"	4	"	"	"	15
"	"	"	14	"	15	"	"	"	16
"	"	"	15	"	16	"	"	"	17
"	"	"	17	"	4	"	"	"	18

The positions in the new figure have the following meanings:

11. Spirit or ghost.
12. Food.
13. *Ombiasy* (the practitioner himself).
14. Father.
15. Road.
16. Mother, or reunion.
17. God.
18. House or home.

The new figure is compared with the trees given by position 4 in the original figure and groupings not in this trees are ignored. In the example only one position and grouping are significant: *Asiabola* (1 in south trees), which means alarm or burning. It occurs in position 13, representing the practitioner. It reinforces the "short combat" significance of the grouping in position 5 in the original figure.

Interpretation is by association of ideas. Apparently there is some variation in the practice of different *ombiasy*. Although the names of the groupings are always the same, the significances may vary somewhat. The methods of combining to give the second figure are also somewhat variable. In most of the tribes which use this method these features appear to be stereotyped and I suspect that the Tanala variations are due to an imperfect knowledge of the system.

DETERMINATION OF LUCKY AND UNLUCKY DAYS

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One of the main duties of the *ombiasy* is to determine propitious days for sacrifices, the commencement of enterprises, etc. The

1: Libros 8-3 (1935-37) 1938 FYS Tanala FYS

destiny of a child is also determined by the day of its birth and the ombiasy must discover what this is, and, if evil, take steps to change it.

The Tanala year consists of twelve lunar months called volana (lit. "moon"). These run continuously and there seems to be no idea of the year beginning with any one of them. The Menabe month names are as follows:

January, Vatromitre	*May, Afoza*	*September, Shakave*
February, Asotry	*June, Bolaha*	*October, Volambita*
March, Hasoka	*July, Mahe*	*November, Sharavasina*
April, Volamitre	*August, Shakaiaka*	*December, Sharavasitra*

The month begins with the new moon and continues twenty-eight days. Each month is characterized by certain climatic features, the blooming of a certain plant, etc., and when the month count seems to lag too far behind the seasons a month is repeated. This is done informally and by general consent. There is no central authority to which the rectification of the calendar can be referred. Each month is divided into four weeks of seven days.

Among the Menabe the month count is only used incidentally in determining lucky and unlucky days. At the present time the better practitioners use a regular calendar based on the position of the days in the month, but all informants agreed that this is a recent innovation, learned from the Antaimoro tribe. I did not learn how the significance of birth days was determined in ancient times. Lucky days for activities were determined as follows:

The time from new to full moon was propitious for sacrifice and beginning enterprises; the time while the moon was waning was not propitious. Thursdays and Sundays were also unpropitious and children born on these days had a bad destiny. In appointing the time for a sacrifice or beginning an enterprise the latter half of the month and Thursdays and Sundays were eliminated. The ombiasy then selected one of the remaining days at random and made the shorter form of sand sikidy. If the arrangement ○○ *Asindrala* appeared in the positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 15, the day was propitious. The sikidy was repeated five times and if this arrangement did not appear, another day was tried.

The calendar now used to determine lucky and unlucky days is as follows, the month beginning on Monday.

grains of rice in the hole and covers them with earth, saying: "There 759
is your food. Go into the tomb." After this he dances at the tomb. 777

A charm which protects from the stings of scorpions is made by 761
taking inner leaves from the unopened center of the pandanus, 276
small peppers and the roots of *ixiguelonia*, a sort of grass. These are ground together on a stone and a little of the material rubbed into incisions on the palm of the hand and the tongue. A single inoculation gives immunity for life. The person can even pick up scorpions with impunity if he spits on them first.

It has already been said that the Tzeltal *ordinsy* are not averse 777
to experiments, and they will invent new charm compounds to meet 791
new circumstances. They even go a step further and test the efficacy of their charms before selling them, or at least claim to do so. If the charm is an *ixiy hoxy* (charm against gunshot wounds) the *ordinsy* will hang it up in front of a *lambe* ("cloth mantle") and fire at it from a distance of ten or twelve feet. If it has been made properly, the *lambe* will be uninjured and the bullet will be found lying on the ground flattened, as though it had struck a rock. If the charm is an *ixiy vaxky* (cattle *ixiy*, protecting herdsmen and bull baiters) the *ordinsy* puts it on and tries its efficacy by thrusting against his thigh an ox horn which has been made as sharp as possible. If the charm is good, the horn cannot pierce his skin.

Every charm has its associated *fuxly*, a taboo or prohibition, 777
which must be learned by the maker as a part of the formula, and 892
which is told to the purchaser. Apparently it is not necessary for the maker to observe this *fuxly* himself, except while actually engaged in the manufacture of the charm, but the person using the charm must observe it consistently or the charm will immediately lose its virtue. The *fuxly* for *ixiy snun* (charms to obtain children) are most numerous. It is forbidden for a woman wearing one to eat food directly from the pot, to lend her mat or *lambe* to another person, or for anyone to use them. She is forbidden to run races, or to poke her finger into a child's cheek to make it laugh. It is also forbidden for anyone to stop a woman wearing such a charm by standing in front of her with both arms held out sidewise. At the time a woman assumes an *ixiy snun* she announces these *fuxly* to everyone in the village and a person who breaks or causes her to break one of them will be called before the village assembly, reprimanded and, if it was done maliciously, fined.

The *ixiy hoxy* has as a *fuxly* the painting of a bamboo water bottle 777
toward the door of the owner's house, unless water is being poured 784

arrangement by which an enemy king took no part in the combat and was saved by any commoner who captured him was due to the social organization of the Ilongo. Among them one gens had attained royal rank and nearly all the kings belonged to it. The commoner was thus saving the life of one of his own king's relatives.

Among the Menabe the whole arrangement was looser and more democratic. There were no kings in the old days and war was decided upon by the influential men of the gens. Later, when royal institutions had been introduced, the king and council decided on war and the king then had a trumpet blown to summon the whole village to the public square. There he announced that they would make war on such and such a village on such and such a date. The date was always a propitious one chosen by an ombiasy who had been selected for his skill in such matters and who would look after the magical details of the expedition. Messengers were sent to the other villages of the gens and to allied gentes. If it was a great undertaking all the able-bodied men of the tribe participated, if a small expedition each village furnished a quota fixed by the king. The *fanalolahy* seem to have had less authority here than in the south. To distinguish them from the other soldiers they wore a *fidana* ("shell disk") and crocodile-tooth charm on the left side of the forehead and a broad bandoleer hung with charms (called *tamanga*) passing over the right shoulder. There were no other war costumes, although all warriors wore charms. Painting for war was unknown.

On the day fixed the warriors assembled in a camp outside the village. This was usually near the village sacred place, where the ancestral stones were erected. There seem to have been no taboos in connection with the camp. Women and children could visit it and young men about to go on the expedition often celebrated their marriages there. Cattle were killed, the number depending on the size of the war party, and the best ox was chosen for sacrifice. The sacrifice was made at the ancestral stones by the regular ritual (see Prayer and Sacrifice). The officiating sojourerons, the hereditary sacrificial priest, was chosen by the ombiasy from among the sojourerons present, and he also advised whether the parts offered were to be grilled or boiled. The usual invocation was made to the gods and ancestors, but they were asked to bless the expedition and the chief against whom it was directed was named. The party sometimes remained in camp as much as three days.

The expedition left the camp at the exact moment set by the ombiasy and both he and the king accompanied it. The ombiasy's

L: Lenoir E-5 (1926-27) 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

ody ("charms") were carried at the very head of the column by a man chosen because he had a fortunate name such as *Vonona* ("successful"), *Ndrembita* ("one who finishes what he has begun") or *Tompoina* ("honorable"). It was forbidden for anyone to pass this man on the march. The *ody* were special ones carried on all war parties and their power increased with success. At night the *ombiasy* stayed with them in a special hut. After the *ody* marched the *fanoloholy*, then the king and *ombiasy*, and last the ordinary soldiers. When they had come close to the enemy village they went into camp and sent forward three or four scouts to reconnoiter the position. These reported to the *ombiasy* on their return and he arranged the plan of attack and decided whether or not to split the force into detachments. They spent the night in camp and attacked at dawn, at a trumpet signal. Neither the king nor *ombiasy* took part in the actual fighting. If the village surrendered with little or no resistance it was not looted or even fired, but was taken as a vassal. If the resistance was fierce and the attackers lost heavily, all the men were killed and the women and children enslaved. As a special severity the men's heads were cut off and hung up in the village for the hawks to eat. In rare cases the tomb of an enemy village was also burned, but this showed unusual rancor. The spoils were divided on the return of the party, the rules being much the same as in the southern division except that the *ombiasy* had first choice of the loot. No ceremonies attended the return.

If a village accepted vassalage, the heads of all the families in it went through a ceremony of submission. Water was prepared in a bowl with the same ingredients as for the oath of blood brotherhood. A spear was held in this head down, all the family heads grasping the shaft with the right hand. If there was not room enough for all, some of them held the left hands of those grasping the spear. The *ombiasy* of the victors tapped the shaft with a knife, repeating the blessings and curses of the blood brotherhood oath, except that the victors remained unbound by the agreement. An ox was killed and after taking the oath the family heads ate pieces of the liver. No ceremony attended its killing and it was not considered a sacrifice. Vassal villages paid no tribute but were expected to assist their overlords in war.

In addition to the regular war parties small slave-stealing raids were rather common. Sometimes as few as two warriors would go to a village and lie in wait near the spring, seizing a woman or child and carrying it off. There was usually a pursuit and the practice

608 Blood oaths of the parent-child type, found among the Betsileo, are lacking among the Tanala. Both parties are of equal importance in the ceremony and have equal rights and duties thereafter. These are specified in the oath, which is varied to meet the wishes of the participants. The duty of mutual assistance is always included and the oath brothers often agree to hold their property in common. Even when this has not been included in the bond one brother can use the other's property without permission, if the owner is away. In a few cases brothers agree to hold even their wives in common, but this is very rare when both live in the same village. The bond is regarded with the utmost seriousness and it is thought that any infraction will be punished supernaturally. An interesting modern development is that brothers now may promise to help each other with the reservation that the help shall not bring them into conflict with the government. Under this a man can legitimately refuse to help his brother if he is a fugitive from justice.

608 The ceremony of taking the oath is attended by members of
771 both families and a few non-related men, who act as witnesses. It
● is supervised by an *ombiasy*. He takes a wooden winnowing tray filled with water and mixes in it wood ashes, rice husks, seven clumps of grass, including the roots, ox dung found in the forest (called "dung of an ox that does not know its mother") and some of the small pellets of earth which are left attached to roots hanging in the air after a bank has fallen. A spear is then held vertically in the bowl, with its point down. Each of the oath takers grasps the spear shaft with his right hand while the *ombiasy* grasps it with his left hand, above the other two. In his right hand the *ombiasy* holds a knife with which he taps the spear shaft lightly and continuously and repeats the following invocation:

"Listen, listen, oh gods! *Zavahery* the male, *Zavahery* the female, Rangitina, Rantomena, Mandramaky jahatra, Ikerenarena, Ranganina, Andrangatsilafa, Mafiovaminkibo, Taimangatra no hanenga, the gold and the sun! Listen, you others who are in the sky! Man is made from blood which you have made solid and to which you have given life. You have advised us, 'If you have business of any sort, do not forget to tell us.' Since so-and-so and so-and-so [giving names] are about to make an oath of friendship here, you have been called, oh gods, to assist in that oath.

"These are the terms on which they enter the bond: The father, the mother, the property, the money, the cattle, the houses and the wives are henceforth to be held in common. They will redeem each

1: Limon E-6 (1926-27) 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

other if one is sold for debt and help each other in death [i.e., provide money, cattle, rice, etc., for the funeral]. If one of the oath brothers or his family is hungry and he demands help of the other in the name of the oath, and he refuses it, punish him, Gods and sacred oath [the phrase is *Zoosakory ny fikasoosana*]. If one is on the side of the river where the canoe is tied and his oath brother calls him from the other side, wishing to pass over, and he refuses to take him over, observe it and punish him, Gods and sacred oath. If enemies lie in wait to kill one and the other can frustrate them and does not, punish him, Gods and sacred oath. If one fails in his duty because he does not recognize the other, or because it is impossible for him to do what the other asks, do not punish him, Gods and sacred oath. Under all circumstances, if one brother betrays the other may the crocodiles and water spirits [*lolo*] seize him when he crosses water and the lightning strike him when he is on land."

The ombiasy then recites the following imprecations on the oath breaker, calling out the number before each curse: "*Iraika* [one]! May his belly swell if he does treason. *Roa* [two]! May all evils happen to the traitor at once. *Telo* [three]! May the lightning break him in three pieces. *Efatra* [four]! May the crocodile devour him. *Dimy* [five]! May sickness slay both him and his family. *Enina* [six]! May his life be suspended between heaven and earth. *Fito* [seven]! May his liver and gall be torn out. *Valo* [eight]! May no remedy save him from death. *Sivy* [nine]! May he be subject to many maladies and may his stomach swell. *Folo* [ten]! May leprosy eat away his fingers and toes."

The ombiasy then begins to count again and calls down blessings on the brothers if they keep the oath: "One! May their wealth, goods and children increase. Two! May cattle and honor come to them. Three! May they live in *Zoosakory*, the life giver, so that they will never be sick or troubled. Four! May only old age and death separate them from honor, the respect of others and wealth. Five! May money and children come to them. Six! May they have the honor and consideration of others, Oh God, and never be sick or even indisposed. Seven! May this oath bring them good fortune and be useful to them. Eight! May their money never leave them and may cattle enter their pens. Nine! May they and their families live together and never separate."

After this the ombiasy invokes the ancestral spirits of the oath brothers, calling them to witness the bond and repeating the entire formula without change. He then makes a small cut over the heart

609 of each with a sharp knife. Each man takes a piece of raw ginger
711 root and smears it with his own blood. They face each other and each covers the other's eyes with his left hand while he places the ginger root in the other's mouth with his right. They do this simultaneously, repeating together: "May you also become blind if you are a traitor to me." The ombiasy then takes a leaf of the *longoja* plant and pulls it into two pieces lengthwise, saying: "If either of you is a traitor, may his body be torn in two like this leaf, so that one part will be on the east coast of this island and the other on the west." Half the leaf is laid on the eastern and half on the western side of the house. Then the oath brothers pay the ombiasy and witnesses, and name and point out to each other the members of their families.

The above account was obtained from Ratsalobo, an ombiasy of the Zafindramasaka gens of the Tanala Menabe, and is a description of a particular ceremony which he had himself directed. Accounts obtained from other ombiasy indicate that each one has his own formula, although all of these conform to a definite pattern. The use of the rice winnower, grasping of the spear, tapping with the knife, invocation first of the gods and then of the ancestors, and the eating of ginger root smeared with each other's blood, are constant. The materials mixed in the rice winnower, the terms of the contract and the blessings and imprecations are variable. One set of imprecations is as follows: 1. May illness come and slay the traitor. 2. May his liver become diseased and be covered with spots. 3 and 4. Same as in imprecations previously given. 5. May the sickness turn and turn in him, i.e., may it be constantly active and attack all organs. 6. May the malady enter him six times a day. 7. May his gall bladder burst. 8. May the illness, when it comes, kill him before he can drink water, i.e., instantly. 9. May sickness spread through his whole body. 10. May all his limbs be broken.

728 When a village was captured and reduced to vassalage the heads
736 of the lineages and more important families were required to take an oath of loyalty to the victors. This was identical in content and procedure with the oath of blood brotherhood except that the victors remained unbound. The natives knew of no instance in which the chiefs of two gentes had entered into blood brotherhood to cement an alliance between their followers.

OLD AGE

145 Although no vital statistics are available for the Tanala, the life expectation for adults seems to be little if at all inferior to that